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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the ethnic identity and achievement motivation of adolescents, this book reports on a study of Mexican-origin and Anglo American adolescents and sets it in sociopolitical, theoretical, ethnohistorical, and demographic contexts. The opening chapters examine public malaise over immigration and ethnic diversification in the United States and Europe; the limitations of methodologies in social science research and the need for using a variety of methodologies in ethnography; and the demographic, social, economic, and cultural characteristics of U.S. Latinos. The heart of the book is a study of four groups of adolescents: Mexicans in Mexico, Mexican immigrants to the United States, U.S.-born children of Mexican immigrant parents, and mainstream Anglo Americans. The 189 subjects, aged 13-18, attended public middle schools or high schools. Psychological instruments, including one that elicited personal narratives, were used to examine familism, family conflict, peer influence, attitudes toward authority and school, achievement motivation, and self-concept. All three Mexican-origin groups had higher levels of familism than did Anglo adolescents. Compared to Mexicans and Mexican immigrants, Anglo American adolescents had lower achievement motivation and greater ambivalence toward authority and schooling, concerns with autonomy, family conflict, and peer group orientation. Second-generation Mexican Americans were transitional, revealing strong family orientation but lower achievement motivation. Expectations of immigrants and Mexican Americans were strongly affected by societal hostility and discrimination. An epilogue considers California's Proposition 187 and the particularly poisonous effects of xenophobia on children. Appendix includes statistical tables. Contains an extensive bibliography and an index. (SV)